

Sound of the future



IMAGES THROUGHOUT
Interior shots of Spiritland and
its headphone shop in Mayfair

Music used to be about records – now it's a vital glue bringing brands,
wellbeing and entertainment together, as three pioneers show





Words — Anthony Teasdale

■ SOUNDTRACKING YOUR FAVOURITE HOTEL

Rob Wood, Music Concierge

"Music Concierge is a music consultancy service that designs the soundtracks of luxury brands globally: defining a brand through music, while emotionally appealing to its audience. We supervise the playlists of companies such as Mulberry, Alfred Dunhill, and Harvey Nichols, and work with leading hotels like the Rosewood in London; RYSE in Seoul; the Park Hyatt, Tokyo, as well as restaurateurs such as Tom Kerridge and Angela Hartnett.

We're even working with Tottenham Hotspur FC, where we've curated the music at the first-team's amazing accommodation centre, The Lodge. The music is specially designed to increase player wellbeing, restfulness and team spirit.

Our clients use music to help set the scene and heighten their brand experience. We might be looking to relax people after their long journey to a desert island resort with beautiful calming music. Or looking to heighten a sense of awe or wonder as guests take in an incredible lobby design in a city-centre boutique hotel.

It's about connecting brand, design, physical space and audience to music. Our consultants value spending time on location whenever possible to understand the experience, meet the stakeholders, look at the concept, and get a sense of place. We also often visit neighbourhood record shops to uncover local tracks and subcultures.

It can be a challenge in places like India and China, but over the years we've built substantial expertise with numerous forms of music whether it's Arabic, Chinese, Asian or Central/South American.

In terms of favourite playlists, curating the music for COMO Hotels in Bhutan at Uma Paro was particularly special as I was lucky enough to visit that magical kingdom. Working with members' club/charity The House of St Barnabas in London is brilliant because not only do they have good speakers, but the audience is really open-minded so we can flex our creative muscles."

musicconcierge.co.uk

■ USING MUSIC AS MEDICINE

Tom Middleton, SONUX

"I'm a DJ/musician, a sound architect at SONUX – an audio-sensory branding consultancy – and a sleep science coach. My work involves addressing human problems, such as sleep deprivation, stress, pain management and burnout. The mission is to transform lives with a *healthier* soundtrack that boosts mood, state of mind, energy, productivity and performance.

In our recent trials, listening to the soundscapes I've designed to accompany breathwork training shows a 25% reduction in resting heart rate (RHR) in under five minutes. That yields a weekly 30% increase in productivity, saving three-to-four hours lost per week!

Around 60% of the planet is sleep-deprived, which compromises our health. Having felt the negative impact of years touring across multiple time zones, along with becoming a parent, I wanted to rethink my work/family/social life balance. To do this, I needed to explore self-care wellness strategies that would enhance my mental and physical performance.

I've made an album, *Sleep Better*, designed to help listeners reclaim an extra hour of rest by being played before bedtime as part of a new pre-sleep routine. I've used the principles of psychoacoustics, rhythmic entrainment and biophilia (our tendency to want to connect with nature), woven into neo-classical and ambient soundscapes.

It initially engages you, then the rhythms intentionally slow your heart and breath rate, activating the parasympathetic nervous system and kickstarting the 'relaxation' mechanism. This lowers blood pressure and reduces stress, calming the mind and body in preparation for sleep. It's an immersive and evocative soundtrack that transports you to a tropical island at sunset.

Music has a significant effect on us because we're resonant organisms, buzzing with energy – and sound waves are a form of resonant energy that we respond to positively or negatively. Music has the power to modulate brainwaves, respiration and heart rate and trigger hormone secretion. Our tribal ancestors enjoyed the natural highs of making sounds or music and dancing together. We still do this at festivals!"

tommiddleton.com

■ THE AUDIOPHILES' BAR

Paul Noble, Spiritland

"We felt like there was nowhere of quality for us to hear music in London – with the right room, musical programme, food and drink, and service. We wanted something unique and outstanding with excellence and musical credibility at the core.

We work closely with a company called Living Voice, based in Long Eaton. Its speakers are as far as you can go in the world of high-end audio, and it sells only to a small number of wealthy clients. This was a chance for us to bring a level of listening to the public that's pretty much inaccessible unless you're friendly with a billionaire audiophile (which you might be).

We have a broad and deep music policy: you may hear jazz, funk, dub, pop, rock, ambient, country or more on any given night. There's no dance floor, so you're unlikely to get house, techno or hip-hop – but we offer our DJs carte blanche to do what they feel, so as it gets later and louder, the music can head off into unexpected territories.

In 2017, we opened a little shop in New Burlington Street, Mayfair, where we sell headphones and audio players. It's all about picking out the very best selections at each price point, so there are commuter-friendly in-ears for £150, going up to the ultimate reference headphones north of £4,000. At that level, it's like hearing music properly for the first time. Plus you can get a decent Japanese whisky while you're having a listen!

We've just opened a much larger Spiritland in Royal Festival Hall. It's a 180-seat restaurant and bar at the foot of the Hall itself and is the perfect spot for pre- or post-show drinking and dining. The idea was to add something unique to London's cultural life, right in the middle of the city.

There are a lot of 'ultimate Spiritland records', but at the moment it's Jaye P Morgan's 1976 eponymous private pressing record, finally re-released on We Want Sounds. It's the cream of LA's session musicians, recorded at the legendary Sound City studios. Super-smooth, super-heavy soul." •

spiritland.com